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ABSTRACT

Serving as a substitute child caregiver can provide youth with an opportunity to sample the child care occupation while learning child care work skills. This report describes the Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program, a community-based development project. Participating in the program in 1996 were fifteen 19- to 24-year-olds, 9 of whom were parents. The program was comprised of three components. The education component consisted of college courses on managing children's behavior and methods of teaching young children. The application component provided skill training comprised of a total of 420 hours of on-the-job experience over 6 months in cycles of 2 weeks of work experience alternating with 2 weeks of education. Following this component, there was a 3 month apprenticeship phase in which the intern transitioned into the child care work force with support from other child care centers. The reflection component was designed to develop reflective thinking skills and practices. The practice coordinator supported and trained the interns and mentors and delivered the reflection component of the curriculum. Mentors received training in communication, problem solving, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, and teamwork to support them in the mentor role. Interns and mentors were matched for complementary communication styles using the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. As a result of participating in the program, some of the interns decided to pursue further education related to early childhood education, while others decided it was not a career path for them to pursue. (Author/KB)

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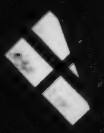
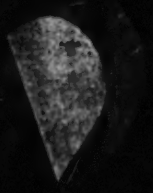
Caring In Practice

Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program





A Synopsis

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Caring In Practice:
Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program

Child Care practice is about caring relationships. In 1996, those caring relationships affected the lives of fifteen young people in Halifax and Sydney. Experienced child care practitioners put their caring into practice by volunteering to mentor these youth in their journey to become child care substitutes. Child Care centres put their caring into practice by opening their centres for these youth for practicum and apprenticeship. Child Care Connection-NS put its caring into practice by piloting the *Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program* to provide these young people with a "taste" of working in a child care centre.

This taste included a means for these young people to sample the child care occupation while learning child care work skills. It included these young people accumulating training credits which can be transferred to other occupations, articulated to other educational institutions or applied to further credentialing in the child care occupation. It included a life span approach, recognizing that there is a development that takes place with experience as well as training in child care. Child care practitioners acted as mentors and role models that fostered, encouraged, and taught these young people the contextual aspects of applying what is learned in child care.

From the interns:

"I was home with my baby – she had colic and I was so tired. The program helped me survive – made me want to get more education and realize that I enjoy school and I would really like to keep going with it."

What has changed?...

> "... how good child care is for kids and how smart they are. I understand why they do what they do. I have shared what I learned with my family and friends. I have more self-confidence in my ability. I have learned to take what works and leave what doesn't."

The effect of this program of caring on the lives of the interns is reflected in their voices throughout this report. It gives us many stories to tell.

- It is the story of a determined single mother who received her first pay check in her life, and celebrated being able to provide a living for herself and her children and getting off of parent's allowance. She is now working full time in a child care centre.
- It is the story of an intern's mother who told us that her whole family has benefited from the program.
- It is the story of a young woman finding colleagues that were also friends who supported her and worked together with her to address self esteem issues. That intern is working full time in a child care program.
- It is the story of investing $13,000 in a young adult's life and in return, society benefiting from a young adult who is supporting her[1] family, contributing to our economy, and enriching the lives of children and colleagues in child care.

And there will be more stories as these young adults continue to grow and develop.

A program such as the *Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program* does not happen spontaneously. A comprehensive infrastructure was necessary to coordinate, plan and manage the processes, materials and events. That structure then had to be responsive to the needs of all the participants to support, facilitate and encourage their inter-relationships. Child Care Connection-NS, a community based development organization for child care, developed and provided that infrastructure. Development funds from Human Resources Development Canada provided the financial support for the infrastructure and the people in the program.

Child Care practice determined the *outcomes* to be contained in the *Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program*. This was seen as crucial in the development of knowledgeable, skilled, reflective child care substitutes. These outcomes were a combination of criteria selected from *Early Childhood Educator Certification*[2] and the *Employability Skills Profile: The Critical Skills of the Canadian Workforce*.[3] Focus groups of child care practitioners fine tuned the outcomes that guided the three components of the *Care Substitute Youth Internship Program*. The outcomes were sorted into sets over five and one half cycles, each set of outcomes being the focal point for each cycle. The *Education, Application* and *Reflection* Components of the program focused on the same outcomes for a certain cycle. *(see Figure 1)*

The Three Components: Education, Application & Reflection

The program combined education, application and reflection to assist youth in their transition from school to work. The model *(see Figure 2)* for the *Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program* ensured that a reflective component was included and key to learning outcomes.

Figure 1: Example of the Relationship of Outcomes to Components

APPLICATION	*Learning Plan: C3.4.b: Plan:* "During singing time I will ask children for songs to sing, will accept all songs and ask children to help children who don't know the song." C3.4.b: Expectations:"Make sure activity is one all can participate in."	*Mentor's Journal:* C3.4.b:" How does the intern assist both shy and aggressive children to participate in the group?" "Each child was given an opportunity to comment. One extremely shy child was asked a yes/know question. the children were reminded that each child would have a chance to comment."
EDUCATION	*Course: Managing Children's Behaviour* Module three: Guiding routines and activities Topics: Guiding routines Guiding indoor and outdoor group experiences Text: Essa & Young Chapter 15: Guiding Routines and Activities Chapter 16: Guiding Behaviour	*Methods of Teaching Young Children* Module three: Programming for the whole child Topics: Developmentally appropriate program planning Setting Up activity areas: Indoor & Outdoor Text: Essa & Young Chapter 7: Goals, Objectives, Evaluation Chapter 8: Programming for the Whole Child

Outcome: C3.4.b: Helps both shy and assertive children to participate effectively in the group.

Intern's Journal:

C3.4.b: What do you do to help a shy child participate in the group? What do you do for the aggressive child?

"To help a shy child I would do the activity myself to show how fun it can be or just talk to the child first about some aspect of the overall theme that may interest them and then lead into the specific activity. For an aggressive child I would talk specifically about the activity and try to get them to focus on the activity."

Evaluation:

C3.4.b: "Satisfactory "given by the mentor and by the intern on this outcome.

REFLECTION

The process check and case study addressed this outcome amongst the other outcomes assigned to the cycle. The construction was influenced by the intern's experience with this outcome and the other outcomes in the cycle. In the application of ethics training within each cycle, the outcome would also be addressed.

The *Education Component* provided the child development theory that underlies the "why" of child care practice. The *Application Component* provided the skills that underlie the "how" of child care practice. The *Reflective Component* "bridged" the education and application components, using the theory and application that the student experienced as content for reflection. This "bridge" component was designed to develop reflective thinking skills and practices in the student. All components interacted with each other, building on theory, practice and reflection. Each component was intrinsically connected to the other and contributed to the growth and development of a skilled, knowledgeable and reflective child care substitute. One component was dependent upon the other components – each sharing equal importance.

The youth intern

In the midst of the program was the *youth intern*. Fourteen young women and one young man, between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four participated in the program. Nine of the interns had a total of eleven children. All interns were recruited through agencies for youth. They came from a variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, bringing a wealth of differences, interests and approaches to the program and to their fellow interns. Upon application, each intern expressed an interest in working with children. This "interest in working with children" served as a motivation in the following nine months of the program. For some, it translated into a desire to obtain their early childhood education credential. For others, it fine tuned the areas they wanted to concentrate on in working with children. For a few, it led them to the decision that this was not a career path for them to pursue.

In Halifax, one year after the program was completed (1998), of the seven interns – one intern is pursuing his ECE credential, four are working in a permanent position in child care and two are studying

another discipline, (one of them has a position when she finishes her training this spring). In Sydney, of the eight interns, one is working full time in a centre, one works four days a week, two are substituting, one works for the Sunshine Foundation, two are at home with their children and one is working part time in a non-related occupation.

Five out of the fifteen interns are not directly involved in child care practice. They have made an informed decision regarding themselves and child care work. Four of the five reported that their learnings about children has helped them with their own children and or in dealing with their family and friend's children.

The Practice Coordinator

The *practice coordinator* shared the pivotal role in the program with the interns. Her role was to support and train the interns and mentors, and to deliver the reflection component of the curriculum. She was key to the optimization of the intern's experience. The *practice coordinator* was the bridge in the relationships between mentors and interns; the application and the reflection program components, and the education and reflection components of the program.

The *practice coordinator* was a mentor to the mentors, and a mentor to the interns. She demonstrated honour, respect and modesty in her appreciation for the child care practitioner's expertise in delivering child care; she had a solid grounding in child development theory; she modeled win-win problem solving; she cared for and about the interns and the mentors; and, she was skilled in the application of ethics.

The *Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program* provided an opportunity for the child care sector to put their caring into practice.

Caring was the keystone to the whole program. The program extended beyond education in child development and management by putting caring into practice. It provided structures, relationships and resources that gave each intern a real taste of child care and an opportunity to belong in the child care sector. It was the caring of the practice coordinator, the mentors and the interns. It was the caring of Child Care Connection-NS in providing the infrastructure to coordinate the caring. It was the caring of Human Resources Development Canada in providing the funding for the pilot program.

Application Component to the Program

The *Application Component* to the *Child Care Youth Internship Program* was a partnership amongst the interns, mentors and the practice coordinator. Its purpose was to provide the intern with a bank of experience in a child care program, to apply what she had learned in the *Education Component*, and to provide individual experience for the intern in the *Reflection Component* of the program.

From the interns:

"We have had experiences that will guide us through our future in child care, thanks to all of our fellow interns, staff and mentors at the centres we visited."

"For some of us, day care was a whole new experience. Before coming into this field, some of us had no idea of the obstacles that a child care practitioner has to overcome in the run of the day. One word *(phrase)* that really sums it up what teachers really go through in the run of a day, is "Jack of all trades." One minute they are a janitor, cleaning up milk from lunch, then they are a doctor, healing and consoling wounds."

The Child Care Centres

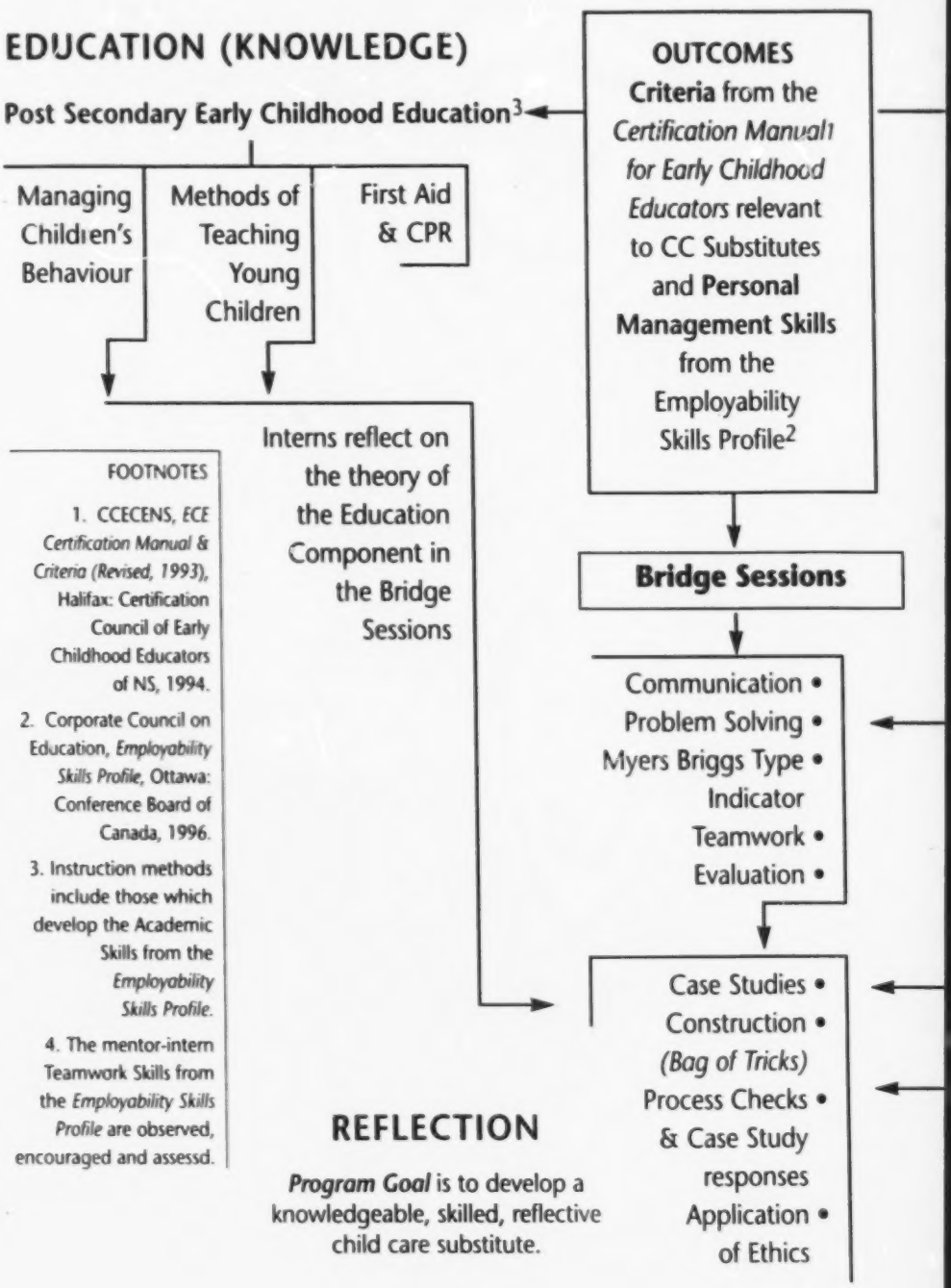
Over a period of six months, eleven child care centres provided the interns with two weeks of on-the-job experience alternated with two weeks of education. This four week cycle repeated itself over six months. Over all, interns received 420 hours of on-the-job experience with their mentors. The centres provided application experience – what the intern learned in theory, she saw and experienced in practice. She reflected on her experiences in the *Reflection Component's Bridge* sessions, giving her an opportunity to integrate theory and practice.

Other centres participated in the three months of the apprenticeship phase of the program. This phase was designed to continue to support the intern in her transition into the child care work force after she had completed the curriculum component. The practice coordinator kept close touch with the interns, monitoring their work experience, problem solving, and acting as a liaison between the centre and the intern.

> *From an intern:*
>
> "I think my reliability has increased greatly since I started the apprenticeship. I enjoy working more now that I have more responsibility. All the positive feedback I get from co-workers and employers motivates me and lets me enjoy working."

The centres provided the interns with an entry point to the child care network to access support, resources and contacts as they developed in child care. Interns found that their actions had an effect on others, and, in meeting their responsibilities they contributed to the well being of the centre and the children in its care.

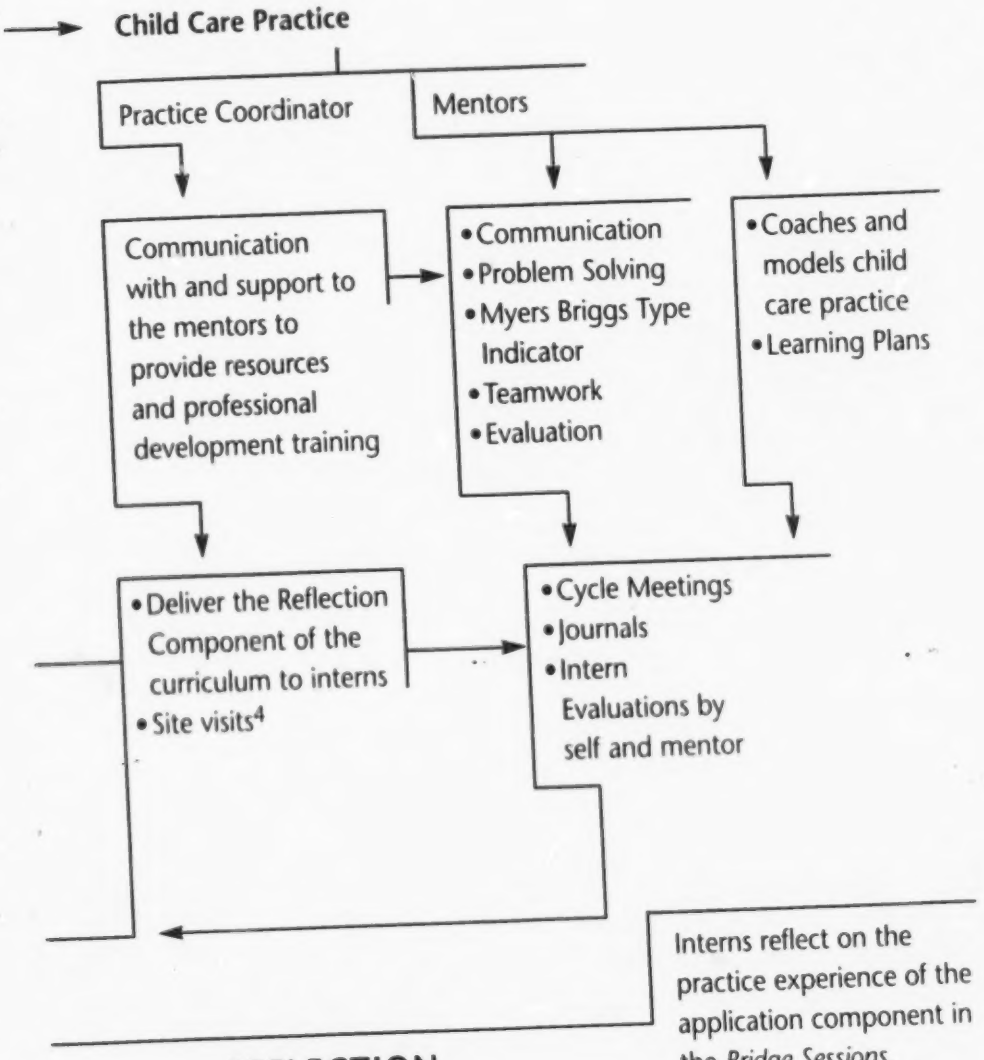
Figure 2: Program Model: Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Project


EDUCATION (KNOWLEDGE)
Post Secondary Early Childhood Education[3]
Managing Children's Behaviour
Methods of Teaching Young Children
First Aid & CPR
OUTCOMES
Criteria from the Certification Manual for Early Childhood Educators relevant to CC Substitutes and Personal Management Skills from the Employability Skills Profile[2]
Interns reflect on the theory of the Education Component in the Bridge Sessions
Bridge Sessions
Communication •
Problem Solving •
Myers Briggs Type • Indicator
Teamwork •
Evaluation •
Case Studies •
Construction • (Bag of Tricks)
Process Checks • & Case Study responses
Application • of Ethics
REFLECTION
Program Goal is to develop a knowledgeable, skilled, reflective child care substitute.

FOOTNOTES

1. CCECENS, *ECE Certification Manual & Criteria (Revised, 1993)*, Halifax: Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of NS, 1994.
2. Corporate Council on Education, *Employability Skills Profile*, Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 1996.
3. Instruction methods include those which develop the Academic Skills from the *Employability Skills Profile*.
4. The mentor-intern Teamwork Skills from the *Employability Skills Profile* are observed, encouraged and assessd.

APPLICATION (SKILL)


Child Care Practice
Practice Coordinator
Mentors
Communication with and support to the mentors to provide resources and professional development training
• Communication
• Problem Solving
• Myers Briggs Type Indicator
• Teamwork
• Evaluation
• Coaches and models child care practice
• Learning Plans
• Deliver the Reflection Component of the curriculum to interns
• Site visits[4]
• Cycle Meetings
• Journals
• Intern Evaluations by self and mentor
Interns reflect on the practice experience of the application component in the Bridge Sessions.

REFLECTION

Interns synthesize theory & practice through reflection in the *Bridge Sessions.*

The Practice Coordinator

In the *Application Component*, the *practice coordinator's* role was to provide support, consultation, resources, and facilitation to the interns, their mentors and the child care centres providing on-the-job experiences. She provided training to the mentors to assist them in their mentoring and supervision roles. Each cycle, she facilitated a meeting of interns and mentors. The practice coordinator kept in touch with the mentors to provide them with support.

The Mentors

The intern's mentor was an experienced child care practitioner who was committed to sharing her skills, knowledge and abilities with the less skilled intern. This mentor-protégé relationship provided the intern with a partner in planning her experiences for the placement segment of the program; and someone who had a greater depth of understanding of what would/would not work, coaching and facilitating the intern in the implementation of her plans. The mentor was also an entry point into the broader child care community, a "contact." The mentor received training in communication, problem solving, *Myers Briggs Type Indicator*, and teamwork, to support her in her mentor role.

Interns and mentors were matched for complementary communication styles using the *Myers Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI). The MBTI is a tool to assess an individual's preferences for making decisions, gathering information and relating to the world. The result is one of sixteen possible types combining the preferences in each of these areas. Research has been conducted by Yeakley (1983) and Ferguson (unpublished, 1987) that predicted communication compatibility using the MBTI. Interns and mentors were matched using this process to optimize the experience for both. In 72% of the

matches, mentors rated their intern's communication as good to very good; and 86% of the interns rated their mentor's communication as good to very good. Training for both mentors and interns in the *Myers Briggs Type Indicator* assisted them in recognizing their own and other's preferences as different, not threatening – an opportunity to enrich the learning of both.

Apart from her mentoring role, the *mentor* also acted in a supervisory capacity in evaluating the intern's performance on the criteria.

From the interns:

"My mentor was great to work with and is amazing when it comes to working with children. I don't think there is anything about a child that she doesn't know or have the information about."

"As I attended the daycare my mentor was a great help to me. She shared some of her knowledge and learning experiences with me. As we got to know one another it seemed like we had a lot more in common than we thought we had."

"Six months ago we were all matched by the MBTI test. The test was pretty accurate, as we all have become great friends with our mentors, throughout the term at our centres."

Process:

The *Application Component* included a process that guided the intern through a plan-do-review cycle. The practice learning plan, journals and evaluations of each intern by herself and her mentor were the tools to implement this process.

• *Practice Learning Plan*

Together, mentors and interns developed a practice learning plan at the beginning of each cycle to ensure that the outcomes for the cycle would be observed and evaluated. These learning plans were completed as a group at a cycle meeting, developing collegiality and reflective thinking in both interns and mentors and their colleagues in the program.

• *Journals*

Both mentors and interns used guided journals to reflect on how the intern was meeting the criteria for each cycle. These journals were passed in to the practice coordinator. Journals provided information for the development of case studies, as well as material for evaluation of the intern's practice.

• *Evaluations*

Interns were evaluated by themselves and by their mentor using the criteria for the cycle. These evaluations were shared between the pair at the cycle meeting, and consensus was negotiated.

> *From the interns:*
>
> "I now have teaching methods more established then initially. I've worked with age groups from infants to six-year-olds so I also have good ideas as to how to work well with each group and what is age appropriate for each age."
>
> "... after going through this experience we have great appreciation and admiration for the people

that work in this field. We all hope that we can be as professional, caring, and understanding as our mentors. Thanks for all your help!"

The Reflection Component

The primary goal of the *Reflection Component* of the program was to develop the skill of reflective thinking in each intern. The intern developed reflective thinking skills using material from the *Education Component* and the *Application Component* of the program. The *Reflection Component* covered seventy-five hours of *bridge sessions*.

Bridge Sessions:

In each cycle during their two weeks of on-the-job experience, interns attended two *bridge sessions*, conducted by the practice coordinator. During these *bridge sessions*, the intern reflected on her practice and evaluated her performance relative to the cycle outcomes. Through reflection upon what she had learned in the *Education Component*, and what she had experienced in the *Application Component*, she constructed teaching materials, solved problems and organized her perceptions.

- *Process Check (11 hours)*

Time was spent during each bridge session to discuss the previous week with the interns and to facilitate interns reflecting on the events using questioning, analyzing, reconsidering and evaluation.

- *Construction: Bag of Tricks (9 hours)*

Interns developed a material relevant to the cycle criteria during the *Bag of Tricks* (Construction) activity of the bridge. In developing it, they reflected on the developmental theory they had covered related to the criteria and on the practice situation in which they would use the material to apply the theory.

• *Case Studies (8 hours)*

Four case studies based on the cycle criteria and journals were developed and presented to the interns by the practice coordinator. Included in the presentations were questions which facilitated questioning, analyzing, reconsidering and evaluating.

• *Self Evaluation (9.5 hours)*

Once each cycle, interns reflected on their application experience and on their education component by reviewing their journals. They used this information to evaluate their practice. This self-evaluation was shared with their mentors at the intern-mentor cycle meeting. Mentors also shared their perceptions and evaluations of the intern's practice with the intern. Each intern reflected on what she had learned relative to the cycle criteria and how she had applied it. This self evaluation was done once each cycle during the bridge curriculum sessions. The practice coordinator and peers facilitated the reflection with the intern.

Cycle Meetings:

Over the six months of training, mentors and interns all met together six times with the practice coordinator. During this two hour session, there was a process check, development of learning plans for the next cycle of practice placement, and evaluation of the intern's placement for the previous cycle.

Practice Coordinator:

The *practice coordinator* delivered the reflection components. She kept in touch with the intern's development in the bridge sessions; read the intern's and mentor's journals; and balanced all this information in considering the intern's self evaluations and the intern's mentor's evaluation of her progress. The *practice coordinator* was an advocate

for the interns. She was "information central" for each intern, and was in the position to intervene when appropriate, maximize when possible, and facilitate when needed.

In the delivery of the reflective component of the program, the *practice coordinator* trained the interns in application of ethics, communication and problem solving, MBTI, and teamwork. In the delivery of process checks, case studies and construction in each bridge session with the interns she modeled and coached them in developing the skills of reflection, win-win problem solving, communicating etc. During the bridge sessions, interns received thirty hours of training to develop reflective thinking skills.

Training:

- *Introduction (12 hours)*

Interns participated in ten hours of an orientation to child care course. Topics included what to expect, transportation, location of centres, and questions and answers. A two hour introduction session was held with the mentors and interns covering the topics of getting to know each other and journal writing.

- *Application of Ethics (10 hours)*

Skill in ethical decision making utilizes reflective thinking on those questions/problems which do not have one right answer. Each cycle, interns received two hours of training in the application of ethics. Topics covered were identifying problems with ethical components, values, code of ethics, and using an ethical decision making model. Providing this skill encouraged reflective thinking regarding honest best practices in the intern.

- *Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (3 hours)*

The MBTI was used to match mentor and intern according to their preferred communication styles.[4] Both interns and mentors received

training on the MBTI in appreciating differences, and making differences work. Both mentors and interns received this training in two separate groups.

- *Communication (3 hours)*

Both interns and mentors received training in the Effectiveness Training[5] techniques of problem ownership, active listening, I-messages and win-win problem solving. Both mentors and interns received this training in two separate groups.

- *Teamwork (2 hours)*

Both mentor and interns participated in a session around the three criteria for a successful team – knowing expectations, valuing each other's skills, knowledge & expertise and sharing a common goal.

> *An Intern's reflection:*
>
> "As a substitute preschool teacher I have learned that I have to be more willing to take other people's suggestions nicely and learn from them, and that every situation is different. As a person I have learned that I can learn anything I want to and be good at it if I put my whole heart into it."

The Education Component

The outcomes which were identified determined the theory credits to be delivered.[6] A call for proposals for this component was awarded to the Nova Scotia Community College. The instructional methods used focused on the academic skills to communicate, think and learn as identified in the Employability Skills Profile,[7] and the use of computers to access information through the internet and word processing.

Interns received two courses in their *Education Component*. The areas these credits addressed were *Managing Children's Behaviour* and *Methods of Teaching Young Children*. The theory behind the identified outcomes were the focus of these two courses. When completed, the interns received 150 credit hours for courses. In addition, they received 240 hours of field placement credit as a result of their application component and bridge sessions.

From the interns:

"This course has taught me a lot of stuff that I didn't know before. I have learned so many things just in the first module that I believe I can put into use."

"I feel confident about what I know education-wise. "

Where Do We Go From Here?

The *Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program* has benefited all who have had a part in it – the interns, the practice coordinators, the mentors, the centre staff, the youth agencies, the education staff, Child Care Connection-NS administration staff and the community college administrators. Everyone has stories to tell about successful outcomes and our own personal growth that has resulted from this project. The success stories are primarily about the interns, however, the model development is also a success story.

The purpose of the *Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program* was to develop a skilled, knowledgeable, reflective child care substitute. To do this, a model that could be implemented in the community by education and practice partners was developed. That model can be applied to other training where *education-application-reflection* components are important in program delivery. It is a model that shares authority between education and practice – demonstrating

honour, respect and modesty amongst partners. The outcome of implementing the model is a novice practitioner who – recognizes why she does what she does; how to do what she does; and reflects upon what she does to do it better.

Since community based development is the mandate of Child Care Connection-NS, in this project its primary role was to build the model. In this community based development capacity, Child Care Connection-NS looks forward to negotiating the program's continuation, and being a partner in facilitating the interface with the practice. Whether or not the *Child Care Substitute Youth Internship Program* continues, its effects will continue in the lives of all who participated.

References

1. *Caring For a Living* (1991) reported that 97% of child care practitioners are female. Female gender will be used throughout the document to reflect this reality.
2. CCECENS, *Early Childhood Educator Certification Manual & Criteria (Revised 1993)* Certification Council of Halifax: Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia, 1994.
3. Corporate Council on Education. *Employability Skills Profile: The Critical Skills of the Canadian Workforce*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 1996.
4. Yeakley, FR. *Journal of Psychological Type*, Spring 1983

   and

   Ferguson, EE. *Temperament as a predictor of teaching team effectiveness*, unpublished research, 1987.
5. Gordon, T. *Parent Effectiveness Training*, New York: Wyden, 1970.
6. These credits would not qualify the intern under the "as trained" licensing equilvancy. This was intentional so that while the interns would qualify as substitutes they would not replace "trained" child care practitioners.
7. Corporate Council on Education. *Employability Skills Profile: The Critical Skills of the Canadian Workforce*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 1996.